

CXI. *An Account of what happened at Bergemoletto, by the tumbling down of vast Heaps of Snow from the \* Mountains there, on March 19, 1755 : As taken by the Intendant of the Town and Province of Cuneo. Received from Dr. Joseph Bruni, Professor of Philosophy at Turin, and F. R. S. Communicated by Mr. Henry Baker, F. R. S. Translated from the Italian.*

Read Nov. 11, 1756. **I**N the neighbourhood of Demonte, as one descends through the upper Valley of Stura, on the left hand, about an hour and half distant from the road leading to the castle of Demonte, towards the middle of the mountain, there were some houses in a place called by the inhabitants Bergemoletto, which on the 19th of March, in the morning, (there being then a great deal of snow) were intirely overwhelmed and ruined by two vast bodies of snow, that tumbled down from the

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\* A remarkable instance of the fall of a vast mass of snow from the Alps, and of mischief occasioned by it, is mentioned by Paulus Jovius in his Life of Pompeius Columna.—“ Pompeius—trans Alpes contendit, quo itinere summum se vitæ periculum adiisse sæpe memorabat, quum ipso Peninas superante Alpes devoluta ingens e summis Alpium jugis nivium moles permultos omnis generis mortales, et in his integram Sedunorum legationem paucis ante se passibus oppressisset.”

upper mountain. All the inhabitants were then in their houses, except one Joseph Rochia, a man of about 50, who with his son a lad of 15, were on the roof of his house, endeavouring to clear away the snow, which had fallen without any intermission for three preceding days. A priest going by to mass advised him to come down, having just before observed a body of snow tumbling not far distant from the said Rochia's house, but which being not large had done no harm. The man imagining this small mass would be followed by larger ones, got down from the roof with great precipitation, and fled with his son he knew not whither: but scarce had he got thirty or forty steps, before his son, who followed him, fell down: on which looking back, he saw his own house and those of his neighbours covered with an high mountain of snow. He lifted up his son, and then reflecting that his wife, his sister, two of his children, and all his effects, were buried under this vast heap of snow, he fainted away; but soon after recovering got safe to a friend's house.

Two-and-twenty persons were buried under this vast mass of snow, which was 60 English feet in height, insomuch that many men, who were ordered to give them all possible assistance, despaired of being able to do them the least service.

After five days, Joseph Rochia having recovered of his fright, and being able to work, got upon the snow (with his son, and two brothers of his wife) to try if they could find the exact place under which his house and stable were buried; but though many openings were made in the snow, they could not find the desired place. However the month of

April proving very hot, the snow beginning to soften, and indeed a great deal of it melted, this unfortunate man was again encouraged to use his best endeavour to recover the effects he had in the house, and to bury the remains of his family. He therefore made new openings in the snow, and threw earth into them, which helps to melt the snow and ice. On the 24th of April the snow was greatly diminished, and he conceived better hopes of finding out his house, by breaking the ice (which was six English feet thick) with iron bars, and observing the snow to be softer underneath the ice, he thrust down a long pole, and thought it touched the ground; but the evening coming on he proceeded no farther.

His wife's brother, who lived at Demonte, dreamed the same night, that his sister was still alive, and begged him to help her. Affected by this dream, he rose early in the morning, and went to Bergemolletto, where he told his dream to Joseph and his neighbours; and, after resting himself a little, went with them to work upon the snow, where they made another opening, which led them to the house they searched for; but finding no dead bodies in its ruins, they sought for the stable, which was about 240 English feet distant, and having found it, they heard a cry of "Help, my dear brother." Being greatly surprized as well as encouraged by these words, they laboured with all diligence till they had made a large opening, through which the brother who had the dream immediately went down, where the sister with an agonizing and feeble voice told him, "I have always trusted in God and you, that you would not forsake me." The other brother and

and the husband then went down, and found still alive the wife about 45, the sister about 35, and a daughter about 13 years old. These women they raised on their shoulders to men above, who pulled them up, as it were from the grave, and carried them to a neighbouring house: they were unable to walk, and so wasted that they appeared like mere shadows. They were immediately put to bed, and gruel made with rye-flour and a little butter was given to recover them. Some days after the Intendant came to see them, and found the wife still unable to rise from her bed, or use her feet, from the intense cold she had endured, and the uneasiness of the posture she had been in. The sister, whose legs had been bathed with hot wine, could walk with some difficulty; and the daughter needed no farther remedies, for she was quite recovered.

On the Intendant's interrogating the women, they told him, that their appetite was not yet returned; that the little food they eat (excepting broths and gruels) lay heavy on their stomachs, and that the moderate use of wine had done them great good: they also gave him the account that follows.

In the morning of the 19th of March we were in the stable, with a boy 6 years old and a girl about 13: in the same stable were 6 goats, one of which having brought forth 2 dead kids the evening before, we went to carry her a small vessel full of rye-flour gruel; there were also an ass and 5 or 6 fowls. We were sheltering ourselves in a warm corner of the stable till the church bell should ring, intending to attend the service.

The wife relates, that wanting to go out of the stable to kindle a fire in the house for her husband, who was

then clearing away the snow from the top thereof, she perceived a mass of snow breaking down towards the east, on which she went back into the stable, shut the door, and told her sister of it. In less than three minutes they heard the roof break over their heads, and also part of the ceiling of the stable. The sister advised her to get into the rack and manger, which she did very carefully. The ass was tied to the manger, but got loose by kicking and struggling, and though it did not break the manger, it threw down the little vessel, which the sister took up, and used afterwards to hold the melted snow which served them for drink.

Very fortunately the manger was under the main prop of the stable, and thereby resisted the weight of the snow. Their first care was to know what they had to eat: the sister said, she had in her pocket fifteen white chestnuts: the children said they had breakfasted, and should want no more that day. They remembered there were 30 or 40 loaves in a place near the stable, and endeavoured to get at them, but were not able, by reason of the vast quantity of snow. On this they called out for help as loudly as they possibly could, but were heard by nobody. The sister came again to the manger; after she had tried in vain to come at the loaves, gave two chestnuts to the wife, and eat two herself, and they drank some snow water. All this while the ass was very restless and continued kicking, and the goats bleated very much, but soon after they heard no more of them. Two of the goats however were left alive, and were near the manger; they felt them very carefully, and knew by so doing that one of them

them was big, and would kid about the middle of April; the other gave milk, wherewith they preserved their lives.

The women affirmed, that during all the time they were thus buried, they saw not one ray of light, nevertheless for about twenty days they had some notion of night and day; for when the fowls crowed they imagined it was break of day: but at last the fowls died.

The second day, being very hungry, they eat all the remaining chesnuts, and drank what milk the milch goat yielded, which for the first days was near two pounds a day, but the quantity decreased gradually.

The third day, being very hungry, they again endeavoured to get to the place where the loaves were, near the stable, but they could not penetrate to it through the snow. They then resolved to take all possible care to feed the goats, as very fortunately over the ceiling of the stable, and just above the manger, there was an hayloft with a hole through which the hay was put down into the rack. This opening was near the sifter, who pulled down the hay and gave it to the goats as long as she could reach it, which when she could no longer do, the goats climbed upon her shoulders, and reached it themselves.

On the sixth day the boy sickened, complaining of most violent pains in the stomach, and his illness continued six days, on the last of which he desired his mother, who all this time had held him in her lap, to lay him at his length in the manger. She did so, and taking him by the hand felt it was very cold; she then put her hand to his mouth, and  
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finding it likewise very cold, he gave him a little milk; the boy then cried, "O my father in the snow! Oh! father! father!" and then expired.

The mother told the sister the boy was dead, and then laid him in the manger near where the sister was. In the mean while the quantity of milk given by the goat diminished daily, and the fowls being dead they could no more distinguish night and day; but according to their calculation the time was near when the other goat should kid, which as they computed would happen about the middle of April; at length they found the goat was kidding by its cries: the sister helped it: they killed the kid to save the milk for their own subsistence. And now they knew it was the middle of April. Whenever they called this goat it would come and lick their faces and hands, and gave them every day two pounds of milk, for which reason they still bear a great affection to this same goat.

They say, during all this time, hunger gave them but little uneasiness, except on the first five or six days: that their greatest pain was from the extreme coldness of the melted snow water, which fell on them, from the stench of the dead ass, dead goats, fowls, from lice, &c. but more than all from the very uneasy posture they were obliged to continue in: for though the place in which they were buried was 12 English feet long, 8 wide, and 5 high, the manger in which they sat squatting against the wall, was no more than 3 feet four inches broad.

For 36 days they had no evacuation by stool after the first days: the melted snow water (which after some time they drank without doing them harm) was discharged

charged by urine. The mother said she had never slept, but the sister and daughter declare they slept as usual. The mother and sister say, that on the day they were buried their monthly evacuations were upon them, but they had not the least sign of them afterwards.

The above account was attested by the said women before the Intendant on the 16th of May, 1755.

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**CXII.** *An Account of some of the more rare English Plants observed in Leicestershire.*

To the Earl of Macclesfield, President of the ROYAL SOCIETY.

My Lord,

Read Nov. 25, 1756. **I** Take the liberty, by your lordship's means, of communicating to the Royal Society an account of some of the more rare plants, growing spontaneously in Leicestershire, transmitted to me by its author, Mr. Richard Pultney, an apothecary at Leicester. Mr. Pultney is a person of real merit, well skilled not only in whatever relates to his profession, but also in various parts of Natural History. His botanical knowledge is very extensive, and he is very zealous in promoting it. He has already laid before the public, though his modesty would not permit